

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ADDIS 03229 240936Z
ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-04 NSC-05
NSCE-00 PM-03 PRS-01 PA-01 /033 W
-----240945Z 018793 /13

P R 240623Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4115

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 3229

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ET, US

SUBJ: ERITREAN REQUEST FOR DIALOGUE

REF: STATE 115490

1. REFTTEL, OF COURSE, AS SEEN FROM ADDIS, REPRESENTS AN
IMPORTANT SHIFT IN USG POLICY TOWARDS ERITREANS. AS NEW
POLICY IS IMPLEMENTED, I OFFER FOUR NOTES OF CAUTION:

A. THIS EMBASSY DOES NOT NECESSARILY SHARE ESTIMATE
OF INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY THAT ERITREA WILL ACHIEVE INDE-
PENDENCE WITHIN 12-18 MONTHS, DE FACTO OR OTHERWISE. FOR
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ADDIS 03229 240936Z

ERITREANS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS, THEY WILL HAVE TO DEFEAT
BULK OF ETHIOPIAN ARMY WHICH IS STILL FAR BETTER
ARMED THAN ERITREANS ARE. THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS
WHY THIS IS NOT LIKELY BE EASY:

(1) DIRG HAS MADE IT VERY CLEAR THAT EPMG HAS
NO INTENTION OF GIVING UP ON ERITREA.

(2) ARMY HAS SHOWN NO PROPENSITY FOR OFFENSIVE ACTION, BUT IT HAS DEMONSTRATED A VERY CONSIDERABLE CAPACITY FOR HOLDING ON. AT SUCH TIME AS ISOLATED, OUTLYING GARRISONS ARE PICKED OFF BY ERITREANS OR ABANDONED BY ETHIOPIANS AND ARMY IS CONCENTRATED IN ASMARA, MASSAWA, ASSAB AND PERHAPS ONE OR TWO OTHER TOWNS, SO LONG AS THEY CAN BE RESUPPLIED, THEY ARE GOING TO BE VERY DIFFICULT TO DISLODGE, AND IF WORST CAME TO WORST COULD EVEN HOLD ERITREANS RESIDENT IN SAY ASMARA, HOSTAGE AGAINST CONTINUED INSURGENT ACTION.

(3) MEANWHILE, EPMG IS TRAINING TWO NEW DIVISIONS, ARMING THOUSANDS OF MILITIA WHO MAY NOT NECESSARILY GO TO WAR IN ERITREA BUT CAN FREE ARMY TROOPS ELSEWHERE FOR DUTY IN ERITREA, AND IS OBTAINING LARGE QUANTITIES OF WEAPONS. ALL THIS ACTIVITY STRONGLY SUGGESTS TO US THAT EPMG WILL MAKE MAJOR EFFORT HOLD ON TO ERITREA.

(4) ERITREA IS SUBJECT ON WHICH ETHIOPIANS IN GENERAL USUALLY AGREE. ITS RETENTION AS PART OF ETHIOPIA IS BY NO MEANS SOLELY ON EPMG POSITION.

B. REFTTEL MAKES ONLY PASSING REFERENCE TO FACT THAT ERITREAN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS ARE SPLIT THREE WAYS. WHILE THERE APPARENTLY IS SOME DEGREE OF MILITARY COOPERATION, SUCH IS NOT YET CASE WITH POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ADDIS 03229 240936Z

LEADERSHIP. UNLESS WE ARE PREPARED TALK WITH ALL THREE, WE RISK BEING IDENTIFIED WITH WRONG HORSE AT SOME POINT IN TIME IN FUTURE. WE SUSPECT OUR CHANCES OF TALKING WITH MARXIST EPLF ARE SLIM INDEED AND WOULD NOT BE VERY FRUITFUL.

C. WE HAVE NOT HITHERTO BEEN IN BUSINESS OF DEMONSTRATING THAT USG IS SYMPATHETIC TO PLIGHT OF ERITREAN PEOPLE, WHICH READS TO US AS SYMPATHY FOR ERITREAN INSURGENCY AS IT WILL ALSO BE READ BY ARAB STATES SUPPORTING ERITREANS AND AFRICAN NATIONS THAT SUPPORT CONCEPT OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. IF BY "PLIGHT" WE MEAN HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS OF INSURGENCY, WE SHOULD MAKE THIS DISTINCTION CAREFULLY.

D. WE FEEL CONSTRAINED TO REPEAT THAT ERITREANS SUCH AS OSMAN SALEH SABBE MAY VERY WELL PUBLICIZE THEIR CONTACTS WITH USG REPS FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. GIVEN EPMG FIXATION ON ERITREA, WE DO NOT QUITE

SHARE DEPT'S OBSERVATION THAT FUTURE US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS HOWEVER LOW-LEVEL THEY MAY BE NOW ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY OCCASIONAL CONVERSATIONS WITH ERITREAN INSURGENTS SHOULD THEY BECOME KNOWN. ETHIOPIAN SENSITIVITY ON MATTERS ERITREAN WAS ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED SEVERAL DAYS AGO WHEN BRITISH AMBASSADOR WAS CALLED IN BY FONMIN WHO BELABORED HIM OVER ARTICLES BY COLIN LEGUM AND WILLIAM LEE (STATE 105980 AND ADDIS ABABA 2945) THAT SUGGESTED INTER ALIA THAT EPMG WAS WILLING MAKE DEAL OVER FUTURE OF ERITREA.

2. IN CONNECTION WITH 1(C) ABOVE, IN RESPONDING TO EMBASSY KHARTOUM'S REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION OF AN EXPRESSION OF USG POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR SUDAN IN REGIONAL CONTEXT (KHARTOUM 1731-NOTAL), I HOPE THAT IF DEPT CHOOSES DO SO, ANY SUCH EXPRESSION WILL DIVORCE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ADDIS 03229 240936Z

US FROM SUDANESE POSITION VIS-A-VIS ERITREA AND SUDAN'S INTEREST IN RED SEA SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS.
TIENKEN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECESSION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, LIBERATION FRONTS, MILITARY CAPABILITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ADDIS03229
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770184-0832
Format: TEL
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770526/aaaaavyj.tel
Line Count: 142
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5bd6568b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 115490
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2399209
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ERITREAN REQUEST FOR DIALOGUE
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, ET, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5bd6568b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009